

What's in a (Scientific) Name?

Some examples from our Oregon flora:

Scientific Name: _____ **Scientific meaning of species epithet:**

**meaning of generic name (in italics)*

Atriplex confertifolia	-pressed close, crowded
<i>Astragalus lentiginosus</i> (from Pliny - plant with vertebra-like knotted roots)	*ankle bone; mottled, freckled with minute dots
<i>Astragalus curvicaupus</i>	-curved fruit
<i>Asperugo procumbens</i>	-prostrate
<i>Artemisia tridenta</i>	-three-toothed
<i>Artemisia dracunculoides</i>	-little dragon, serpentine rooted(?)
<i>Artemisia ludoviciana</i>	-from Louisiana
<i>Arnica sororia</i>	-closely related, sisters
<i>Arnica fulgens</i>	-shining, bright colored
<i>Arnica discoidea</i>	-rounded leaf with thickened margin
<i>Arnica cordifolia</i>	-heart-shaped leaf
<i>Arctostaphylos patula</i>	-spreading, opened up, broad and flat
<i>Arabis sparsiflora . atrorubens</i>	-having scattered or few flowers; dark red color
<i>Arabis puberula</i>	-spread, outspread
<i>Arabis aculeolata</i>	-prickly, spine-like
<i>Apocynum androsaemifolium</i>	-man's blood
<i>Amsinckia retrorsa</i>	-(spiny leaf edge) turned back
<i>Amsinckia tessellata</i>	-checkered, small areas of color
<i>Amsinckia lycopsoides</i>	-resembling Lycopodium, wolf's foot
<i>Alyssum desertorum</i>	-of deserts
<i>Allium amplexans</i>	-clasping
<i>Allium crenulatum</i>	-scalloped, small-rounded teeth
<i>Allium pleianthum</i>	-more (flowers) than usual
<i>Alopecurus geniculatus</i>	-jointed, knee-like bends
<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	-thickly, markedly hairy (spike)
<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	-spikes
<i>Agropyron subsecundum</i>	-almost totally turned to one side
<i>Agrostis exarata</i>	-ploughed, with embossed grooves or furrows
<i>Achillea millefolium var. lanulosa</i>	-woolly
<i>Abronia umbellata</i>	*delicate; with umbels
<i>Balsamorhiza sagittata</i>	-arrowhead shaped
<i>Balsamorhiza sericea</i>	-silky, long close-pressed hairs
<i>Beckmania syzigachne</i>	-paired branching
<i>Botrychium pumicola</i>	*little bunch of grapes; dwarf-like, pumice-loving
<i>Bromus carinatus</i>	-keeled
<i>Bromus tectorum</i>	-"of a plasterer, tiles"
<i>Bromus inermis</i>	-unarmed
<i>Bromus orcuttianus</i>	-barrel-like
<i>Bromus brizaeformis</i>	-resembling Briza, nodding
<i>Calochortus longebarbatus</i>	*beautiful grass; long-bearded
<i>Campanula prenanthoides</i>	-drooping flowers

Capsella bursa-pastoris	-purse of shepherd (triangular)
Cardamine penduliflora	-hanging flowers
Cardamine oligosperma	-few seeds
Carex athrostachya	-jointed
Carex canescens	-becoming gray
Carex multicosata	-many ribbed
Carex stramineiformis	-straw-yellow
Carex scopulorum	-like a brush or broom
Carex simulata	-at the same time
Carex utriculata	-inflated, bladder-like
Carex subfusca	-somewhat brownish
Centaurea maculosa	-full of spots
Cercocarpus	-tail fruit -persistent long plumed fruit
Cirsium arvense	-pertaining to fields, cultivated land
Cirsium scariosum	-thin, dry membranous texture
Collinsia parviflora	-small-flowered
Corylus cornuta	-horned
<i>Cryptantha celosoides</i>	* <i>hidden flower</i> ; dried, 'burned' flowers
Dodecatheon conjugens	-growing together
Dodecatheon pulchellum	-beautiful and little
Dodecatheon pauciflorum	-few-flowered
Dodecatheon unispicata	-one spike
Draba verna	-pertaining to spring (early blooms)
Eleocharis acicularis	-narrow, pointed, needle-like
Eleocharis obtusa	-blunt, obtuse
Eleocharis ovata	-egg-shaped
Eleocharis palustris	-in swampy places
Elymus cinereus	-grayish
Epilobium glaberrimum	-smooth
Epilobium vinimeum	-long, slender, suitable for basket weaving
Ericameria nauseosus	-sickness producing
Ericameria viscidiflorus	-glutinous sticky flowers
<i>Erigeron chrysopsidis</i> var. <i>brevifolius</i>	* <i>early blooming</i> ; golden flower; short leaves
<i>Erigeron filifolius</i>	* <i>early blooming</i> ; thread-leaved
Eriophyllum lanatum	-woolly
Erodium cicutarium	-with bi- or tripinnate leaves
Erysimum asperum	-rough, or with short, stiff hairs
Festuca subulata	-with a fine sharp point
Festuca trachyphylla	-rough leaves
Festuca viridula	-greenish
<i>Galium trifidum</i>	* <i>milk, used to curdle milk</i> ; divided into three
Gentiana calycosa v. <i>obtusiloba</i>	-with conspicuous calyx; obtusely lobed
Gentiana propinqua	-near, neighboring
Holodiscus dumosus var. <i>glabrescens</i>	-brushy, thorny; becoming smooth
Hordeum brachyantherum	-short flowers

Hordeum murinum	-mousy gray
Hordeum jubatum	-maned, (narrow panicle)
Horkelia fusca	-dark brown
<i>Hydrocotyl ranunculoides</i>	* <i>water growing, cup-shaped</i> ; in water
Juncus bufonius	-in damp places like frogs
Juncus orthophyllus	-straight leaved
Koeleria macrantha	-large flowered
Lamium amplexicaule	-(leaf) clasping stem
Lagophylla ramosissima	-very much branched
Layia glanulosa	-with glands
Leptodactylon pungens	-slender fingered; ending in sharp, prickly point
Lewisia rediviva	-living again (leaves emerge after flower)
Linnaea borealis	-circumboreal (habitats)
<i>Lithophragma bulbiferum</i>	* <i>stone-wall</i> ; with little aerial bulbs
Lonicera involucrata	-having ring of bracts at base of inflorescence
Lupinus albicaulis	-white stem
Lupinus argenteus	-silvery (due to hairs)
Lupinus caudatus	-ending with tail-like appendage
Lupinus lepidus	-with small scales
Lupinus leucophyllus	-densely villous, white-leaved
Madia citriodora	-citron (lemon) odor
<i>Maianthemum dilatatum</i>	* <i>May flowering</i> ; expanded or widened
<i>Maianthemum stellatum</i>	* <i>May-flowering</i> ; star-like, hairs radiating
Mentzelia laevicaulis	-smooth stem
Mitella diversifolia	-leaves of different shapes on same plant
Monardella odoratissima	-smells
<i>Moneses</i>	* <i>one desire (one flower)</i>
Montia perfoliata	-leaf base wraps around stem, no petiole
<i>Myosurus</i>	* <i>mouse tail</i>
Nicotiana attenuata	-drawn out to a weak point
Oenothera subacaulis	* <i>wine-seeking</i> ; (almost) stemless
Osmaronia cerasiformis	-cherry shaped
<i>Pedicularis centranthera</i>	* <i>associated with lice</i> ; spurred flower
<i>Penstemon humilus</i>	* <i>5-stamen</i> ; low growing
<i>Phoenicaulis cheiranthoides</i>	* <i>glabrous, shiny stem</i> ; reddish flowered
<i>Potentilla flabellifolia</i>	* <i>quite powerful medical herb</i> ; fan-shaped leaves
Pterospora	-winged seeds (spore)
Pyrola secunda	-pear-like leaf; flowers turned toward same side
<i>Ranunculus testiculatus</i>	* <i>little frog, amphibious</i> ; 2 globose bodies at fruit base
Ribes divaricatum	-spreading at wide angle
Rorippa curvisiliqua	-curved siliques
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	* <i>sorrel</i> ; sour tasting

Salix amygdaloides	-almond-shaped, like tonsils
Scutellaria angustifolia	* <i>small bowl</i> ; narrow leaved
Sedum stenopetalum	-narrow petaled
Senecio streptanthifolius	-coiled, twisted leaves
Sibbaldia procumbens	-prostrate
Sisymbrium altissimum	-tall
Sparganium emersum	-standing above (the water)
Sparganium eurycarpum	-white fruited

Viola nuttalli -note the hidden, buried seeds with whitish eliasomes, ants eat/bury them

Resources:

A Sourcebook of Biological Names and Terms - 3rd ed. Edmund C. Jaeger 1978

Botanical Latin - 4th ed. William T. Stearn 1992

Flora of the Pacific Northwest - 2nd ed. C. Leo Hitchcock and Arthur Cronquist 2018

The Names of Plants - 4th ed. David Gledhill 2008